



Minnesota
STATE COLLEGES
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The Case For Lean-Flow

HealthEast & Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
Joining forces with empowering results.

2009

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► **THE PLAYERS**

HealthEast Care System is the largest healthcare provider in the Twin Cities' East Metro area, employing about 7,000 people. HealthEast continually strives to become a benchmark for quality in the healthcare field while meeting the needs of its communities.

Saint Paul College, a member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, offers customized training programs to help businesses and organizations stay informed and competitive in the marketplace. These programs introduce advances and best practices pertinent to workplace skills, leadership, organizational sustainability and business solutions.

► **THE PROBLEM**

An increasing backlog of patients needing diagnostic imaging procedures started developing at Woodwinds Health Campus, a collaboration between HealthEast Care System and Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota making it difficult for patients to schedule critical procedures. Some patients were waiting up to five days for an MRI when other medical centers could schedule an MRI within hours after an initial call.

As competition intensified, HealthEast executives wanted to find a way to increase patient satisfaction and reduce costs.

► **THE SOLUTION**

Saint Paul College introduced Lean-Flow practices, a set of strategies first used in manufacturing, to improve efficiency in healthcare settings. Lean-Flow removes waste by eliminating unnecessary gaps in processes, balances the work load among employees and sets standards for organizing work areas.

The college received a Minnesota Job Skills Partnership grant from the state Department of Employment and Economic Development and partnered with HealthEast to develop a customized training program to tackle the problem with a personalized, hands-on approach.



► THE RESULTS

Within three months of the program's launch, Woodwinds patients who needed radiology procedures went from waiting five days for an appointment to less than 24 hours. Since then, about 80 HealthEast employees have been certified in Lean-Flow strategies through this program, and many units in HealthEast's four hospitals and 15 clinics have adopted Lean-Flow practices.

Every unit involved has improved patient and staff satisfaction scores and increased productivity. In the Pain Management Center, for example, patients who usually interacted with nine staff members now deal with no more than four, while check-in and check-out time dropped by 40 percent.

"I wasn't expecting employees to adopt Lean-Flow principles so fast," says Cara Hull, HealthEast's Administrative Director of Business Process Improvement. "Thanks to Saint Paul College, they're quoting Lean-Flow principles, and they're focused on getting rid of waste."

One employee who benefited from the Lean-Flow workshop says the program provided the fundamentals for understanding and applying Lean-Flow ideas and processes. "It challenges you to think and look at your department in a different manner," she adds. "It also teaches you how to cut the fat."

► *Let us empower you*

Many other Minnesota State Colleges and Universities are making a difference in healthcare services with successful programs. Other institutions that offer customized training in lean strategies for healthcare include Alexandria Technical College, Northland Community and Technical College in East Grand Forks, Itasca Community College in Grand Rapids, and Winona State University.

With 32 public colleges and universities—that's 54 campuses in 46 Minnesota communities—Minnesota State Colleges and Universities is the one educational system that makes it easy for businesses to get the mission-critical, customized training services they need to remain competitive.

For more information about how we can empower your business, call **1-800-366-7380** or visit our Web site, www.business.mnscu.edu



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